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REAR PANEL FOR A MOTOR VEHICLE PROVIDED WITH A FOLDING ROOF

The present invention concerns a rear panel for a motor vehicle provided with a roof which can be folded in its rear boot, more particularly for such a vehicle comprising means  
5 able to make the said panel pass from a position of use in which it is disposed generally substantially horizontally between a chassis element of the vehicle and the front edge of a lid of the said boot, and a retracted position in which it is disposed generally substantially vertical so as to  
10 leave clear a passage space for the said roof between the said chassis element and the said edge.

Such rear panels are already known which pivot from the position of use to the retracted position for the entry or exit of the roof in the rear boot.

15 One problem is however posed because, when the panel passes from one position to the other, its lateral edges may be interfered with by the internal trim of the rear part of the roof.

Because of this it was proposed in the documents DE 197 49  
20 552 and US 5 921 608 to produce panels of this type comprising:

- a central element able to adopt the said positions;
- two lateral elements.

25 More particularly in the first of the aforementioned documents, the lateral elements are each articulated on a transverse edge of the said central element about a substantially longitudinal shaft.

However, the control mechanisms for the lateral elements are complex and not very satisfactory.

The present document aims to mitigate this drawback.

More particularly, the present invention aims to provide a rear panel for a vehicle provided with a folding roof in which means are provided for retracting its lateral edges  
5 when it passes from one position to another.

To this end, a first object of the invention is a rear panel for a motor vehicle provided with a roof which can be folded in its rear boot and means able to make the said panel pass from a position of use in which it is disposed generally  
10 substantially horizontally between an element of the vehicle chassis and the front edge of a lid of the said boot to a retracted position where it is disposed generally substantially vertically so as to leave clear a passage space for the said roof between the said chassis element and  
15 the said front edge, the said panel comprising:

- a central element able to adopt the said positions;
- two lateral elements each articulated at a transverse edge of the said central element (5) about a substantially longitudinal shaft;
- 20 characterised by the fact that it comprises:
  - two cam followers each fixed to one of the said lateral elements and able to cooperate each with a cam track fixed to the said chassis;
  - elastic means between the said central element and the  
25 said lateral elements able to apply the said cam followers to the said cam tracks;
  - the said cam followers, cam tracks and elastic means being arranged so as to dispose the said lateral elements generally in the plane of the said central element when the

panel is in a position of use and to incline the said lateral elements with respect to the said central element when the panel is in the retracted position.

5 Thus, when the central element of the panel passes into the retracted position, its lateral elements pivot in a simple fashion with respect to the longitudinal axis in order to incline them with respect to the central element and thus leave clear the passage for the internal trim of the roof.

10 The lateral elements of the panel can pivot either upwards or downwards with respect to their position of use according to the spaces available in the vehicle and the particular kinematics of the panel.

Another object of the invention is a motor vehicle comprising a rear panel as described above.

15 Two embodiments of the invention will now be described by way of non-limiting example with reference to the accompanying schematic drawings, in which:

20 - Figure 1 is a partial view in longitudinal section of a vehicle provided with a folding roof, the panel being produced according to a first embodiment;

- Figures 2a and 2b are half-views in transverse section of a vehicle provided with a panel according to the first embodiment, the panel being respectively in the position of use and in the retracted position;

25 - Figures 3a and 3b are views similar to Figure 2, the panel being respectively in the position of use and in the retracted position, the said panel being produced according to a variant of the first embodiment;

- Figures 4a and 4b are half-views in transverse section of

a vehicle provided with the panel according to a second embodiment, the said panel being respectively in the position of use and in the retracted position.

As shown in Figure 1, a vehicle with a folding roof comprises a chassis 1, a rear boot lid 2 and a rear panel 4 longitudinally joining the rear edge of the chassis 1 to the front edge of the lid 2.

Longitudinally means the front/rear direction of the vehicle.

The roof of the vehicle is composed of a plurality of elements, only the rear element 3 of which is shown. In the position in which the vehicle roof covers the cabin, the rear edge of the roof arrives level with the junction between the rear edge of the panel 4 and the front edge of the lid 2.

To allow the folding of the roof in the rear boot, the panel 4 is tilted into a substantially vertical position and the front part of the lid 2 is raised.

The rear panel 4 comprises a central element 5 and two lateral elements 6 articulated on the central element about a longitudinal shaft 7.

The articulation about the shafts 7 allows a movement upwards (Figures 1 to 3) or downwards (Figure 4) of the lateral elements 6 with respect to the central element 5.

According to the first embodiment, illustrated by Figures 1 to 3, the lateral elements 6 are retracted towards the bottom of the vehicle, so that it is not necessary to withdraw the roof before the panel 4 is moved.

To this end, according to a first variant, illustrated by Figures 1 and 2, articulated arms 8 are provided, fixed by one end to the panel 4 and by the other end to the chassis 1. A linkage 9 directly mounted on these arms 8 (Figure 2) makes it possible, by means of a system of connecting rods (not shown), to make the lateral elements 6 pivot downwards.

According to a second variant of the first embodiment (Figure 3), the downward pivoting of the lateral elements 6 is achieved by means of a lug 10 fixed to the lateral elements 6. This lug 10 constitutes a cam follower able to cooperate with a cam track 11 situated on a support 12 fixed to the chassis 1.

A spring 14 disposed between the lug 10 and a lug 13 situated on the central element 5 of the panel is arranged so as to cause such a pivoting.

According to a second embodiment, illustrated by Figures 4a and 4b, the lateral elements 6 are retracted towards the top of the vehicle, so that it is necessary to withdraw the roof by any suitable means prior to the movement of the panel 4.

To this end, the lateral elements 6 are provided with a cam follower 15 in the form of a swan neck, the end 16 of which is mounted so as to pivot rotationally on the central element 5 of the panel 4. This cam follower 15 is arranged so as to cooperate with a cam track 17 situated on the support 12 fixed to the chassis 1.

A return spring 18 is fixed on the one hand to the nose 19 of the cam follower 15 and on the other hand to a lug 20 situated on the panel. This spring 18 makes it possible to apply the nose 19 of the cam follower 15 to the cam track 17, when the panel 4 is in a position of use (Figure 4a). Then, when the panel 4 is raised, the spring 18 drives the

nose 19 of the cam follower 15 upwards, this movement causing the lifting of the lateral element 6 and its pivoting with respect to the central element 5.

Known means (not shown) are provided to make the central  
5 element 5 of the panel pass from its position of use  
depicted in Figures 2a, 3a and 4a where it provides the join  
between the chassis 1 of the vehicle and the front edge of  
the rear boot lid, to a retracted position in which it  
leaves free passage for the roof elements between the  
10 chassis and the said front edge.